

Readers may feel as if they have missed the first half of a movie. They have. This paper is taken from the almost 17,000 word draft of the penultimate chapter of the book I'm working on, the working title of which is *Unpopular Sovereignty: Rhodesian Independence and African Decolonization*. What you've missed in this chapter is that after various international attempts to settle the Rhodesia situation – a conference in Geneva, Anglo-American proposals – the white minority government proposed an internal settlement with a transitional government the titular head of which was Bishop Abel Muzorewa. To legitimate this government, and to impress the rest of the world – or at least Britain – Rhodesia staged its first one man, one vote election in April 1979. In order to get a high turnout it dispensed with, among other things, citizenship. ZANU and ZAPU demanded a boycott, but at the very least 44% of the African population voted, perhaps without willingness or enthusiasm, but the fact of an election and a figurehead African government complicated everything for an international community nearly exhausted by the guerrilla war. When Conservatives came to power in Britain in May 1979, moderates in the foreign and commonwealth office and the Commonwealth Secretariat began to do what the front line presidents had wanted for years – an all-party conference that would negotiate a ceasefire so there could be elections with all parties competing. The conference was planned and structured at the Commonwealth heads of state meeting in Lusaka in August 1979. Nkomo and Mugabe accepted the invitation but continued to rail against the conference until, in early September at the Non-Aligned Movement meeting in Havana, Samora Machel told them in no uncertain terms that they were to go and negotiate, that there would be elections and that his government, whatever they said in public, would support the winner of those elections. That said, this is a draft, and I'd appreciate it if no one quoted it without my permission.

The Lancaster House Conference of 1979 Race, Citizenship, and the Front Line States

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Lancaster House was great theater. ¹ All the suspense of negotiations, of who would walk out and who would compromise, was not only anticipated but understood to be part of the process. Carrington later wrote “I thought it likely that the invited parties would come, and then create trouble at the moment they decided most favorable, break off the proceedings, walk out...” and leave Thatcher's government, secure in the knowledge that they had tried, regretfully

¹ Years later it had its own BBC Radio 4 program, see Charlton, *Last Colony*.

forced to recognize the government in Salisbury.² At the time, however, Carrington had read the cables coming into the foreign office and knew full well the pressures under which the Patriotic Front would be negotiating: he knew they could not really walk out. He had to have had some sense of how unlikely it was for the conference to completely break down, and he of course knew how disappointed Thatcher's government was with Muzorewa, a man "without any political skills at all."³ Given how much the foreign office knew, and how tense the situation was however much anyone knew, the conference was carefully choreographed. The most obvious choreography was Carrington's, that each segment of the settlement – the constitution, the transitional arrangements, and the ceasefire – be negotiated and resolved before the conference could go onto the next. The less obvious choreography was that of the front line presidents, who, as this section shows, took a firm hand in shaping the conduct of the PF at the conference. The remainder of this chapter will not be a history of the Lancaster House conference in its entirety. I concentrate instead on issues of citizenship and voting that have informed earlier chapters of this book, debates over reserved seats for whites, citizenship, and the procedures for the 1980 election.

There were three delegations, Muzorewa's government, usually called the Salisbury delegation, including David Smith and an increasingly marginal Ian Smith, the British delegation, chaired either by Carrington or the somewhat more conservative Ian Gilmour, Lord Privy Seal, and the PF delegation, which was in fact two delegations, one for ZANU and one for ZAPU, which rarely spoke as one. There was also an audience, in and out of Lancaster House. There were US and Commonwealth observers at the conference. Sir Shridath Ramphal, secretary general of the Commonwealth, organized meetings of Commonwealth heads of state during the conference to "make sure" the British government and the PF "got it right." He spent many evenings in the London apartments of Nkomo and Mugabe advising them.⁴ There were Mozambiquan and Zambian envoys in London ready to offer counsel and convey messages.

² Carrington, *Things Past*, 297.

³ The quote is from Ian Gow, Thatcher's parliamentary secretary, quoted in Charlton, *Last Colony*, 33.

⁴ Quoted in Charlton, *Last Colony*, 109.

Laurens van der Post insisted he was carrying vital messages from South Africa to Thatcher.⁵ The participants' accounts – Carrington, Davidow, Flower, Nkomo, Renwick, and Smith – made much of the drama, the cleverness, and the betrayals, so much so that they tend to be unhelpful as sources.⁶ This compounds the difficulty of working with the published and archival materials about the conference, where so much of what anyone might call negotiations went on in bilateral meetings, in which an increasingly frustrated Carrington worked out agreements with one delegation at a time. There are no summaries of these meetings I have found, but it is clear that much of what was said in the conference room was in response to what had been said in private, or what had been said in the press, or what transpired between a front line president and a member of the Patriotic Front. These are probably fairly typical of the dynamic and coercive working of power maintained outside archival surveillance, but they present historians with a challenge. Rather than see these practices as 'secret,' charged information that reveals the presence of a bureaucracy of intelligence and surveillance, they show the fits and starts – and false starts – of political thinking and political talk.⁷ There is a back and forth quality to my use of archives for this section, largely because a chronological reading of the plenary sessions or diplomatic cables will not, in and of itself, show how the work of negotiation was carried out, let alone the anxieties and strategies in play. In the following pages I argue that to the extent that there was a shaping of the settlement at Lancaster House it was done by the front line presidents and the Patriotic Front fear that the irregularities of the 1979 election would be repeated when they stood for office.

The proposed independence constitution was published on 14 August, the same day invitations were issued to the conference. It had a justiciable declaration of rights with a typical list of rights and protects and freedom. It had the standard features of an independent

⁵ Note of a conversation (on the telephone) between the prime minister and Mr. Laurens van der Post, 31 August 1979, TNA/PREM/19/111. Van der Post often took credit for preventing the collapse of the talks, see J. D. F. Jones, *Storyteller: The Many Lives of Laurens van der Post* (London, John Murray, 2001), 337-38. Nyerere did not seem to have any intermediaries in London during the conference.

⁶ Nkomo barely described the conference, let alone the drama. Instead he detailed ZIPRA's plans for land and air invasion of Rhodesia, Nkomo, *My Life*, 196-98.

⁷ Luise White, "Telling More: Secrets, Lies and History," *History and Theory* 39 (2000), 11-22; Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2009), 25-28.

judiciary, of defense forces acting under the law, of constitutional guarantees of the pension rights of civil servants, and a public service commission would maintain high standards of efficiency while recognizing the legitimate claims of the majority of the population. The fluidity of Rhodesian citizenship was recognized by law. Every citizen of Rhodesia, whether by birth or naturalized, will automatically become a citizen of Zimbabwe. Anyone qualified to be a citizen but who was not had five years in which to apply for citizenship. Every person born in Zimbabwe after independence (which meant 1980, not 1965), unless the child of a diplomat or enemy alien, would become a citizen of Zimbabwe by birth. Every child born outside the country to a father who is a Zimbabwean citizen by birth (or, in the case of illegitimate children, a mother who is a Zimbabwean by birth) will become a citizen of Zimbabwe. Any woman married to a Zimbabwean man was automatically a citizen; a woman who had been married to a Zimbabwean man at the time of the marriage could apply for citizenship. Dual citizenship was to be permitted. Parliament was to be elected by all citizens who were over eighteen. So long as there was a provision for special minority representation – this was soon to be set at seven years – white citizens over eighteen could either be enrolled on the white voters roll or the common one. The constitution did not specify how many parliamentarians there would be or if they would be divided between upper and lower houses. The lower house was presented as algebraic, Y members elected by the common roll from Y constituencies, and Z white members elected from the white roll for Z white constituencies. A delimitation commission would establish the Y and Z constituencies. The constitution proposed a Senate selected by even more cumbersome electoral practices than in the 1969 constitution.⁸

The constitution was sent to the front line presidents for comment. Nyerere was pleased with most of it. His only concern was to make the constitution resemble those of decolonization. Late in August he wrote to Thatcher explaining that while he understood the principle behind reserved seats, it was a mistake to let the minority community elect them by a separate roll. Instead, Zimbabwe should follow the original Tanganyikan constitution of 1961 in

⁸ Rhodesia: Outline of Proposals for an Independence Constitution (Annex A), 14 August 1979, TNA/PREM/19/111. There was considerable objection to dual citizenship, “which landed us in such trouble with Ugandan Asians,” in the House of Lords, see W. Arnold, to FCO, 12 September 1979, TNA/PREM/19/112.

which candidates for European seats would be Europeans nominated by Europeans, but “the entire multi-racial electorate” elected them. Such a system had two advantages: European candidates had to consider the interest of African voters “and in particular avoid provocative racial statements” and African voters had to think of European candidates as potential political allies, rather than “as people automatically hostile to their interests.” In Tanganyika this program broke down racial stereotypes and assisted political integration, wrote Nyerere, so that some Europeans, originally elected to reserved seats have been elected to parliament by “on their own merits” in competition with African candidates.”⁹

Reserved seats, or special electorates, were a tried and true late colonial practice: they protected the rights of minority or vulnerable groups from the overwhelming weight of universal suffrage, which many colonialists and members of minority groups believed could only perpetuate inequalities. The question here was how to justify seats for a minority that had held great and repressive power for fourteen years? Many African nations were dismayed by this and subsequent proposals, but no one in Southern Africa or the front line states seemed to worry. The Patriotic Front objected, but just once; everyone else approved of the principle, they just wanted constraints in its practice. As a late colonial and early post-colonial practice reserved seats for whites were imagined as a gentle social engineering, just as reserved seats for ethnic groups in Southern Europe today is thought to be a mechanism for social engineering in post-conflict societies. All of this begs the question of what kind of nation state was imagined by the social engineers who devised separate electoral rolls? How many selves can successfully self-determine a nation’s future? Does the nation then have an in-built instability, a constitutional ambivalence about who can represent who? The instability and its ability to fracture, historians of South Asia remind us, is not a coincidence: the making of special electorates and the reserved seats for which they vote are ways for politicians to create

⁹ Nyerere to Thatcher, 25 August 1979, TNA/PREM/19/110; Hinchcliffe, Dar es Salaam, to FCO, 1 September 1979, TNA/PREM/19/111. Nyerere opposed this kind of voting when the colonial office first proposed it in Tanganyika, but was able to turn it to his considerable advantage by the election of 1958, see John Iliffe, “Breaking the Chain at its Weakest Link: TANU and the Colonial Office,” Gregory Maddox and James L. Giblin, eds., *In Search of a Nation: Histories of Authority and Dissidence in Tanzania* (Oxford, James Currey, 2005), 168-97.

constituencies that would vanish in one man, one vote elections.¹⁰ Reserved seats are not simply a way to protect minorities they are a way to perpetuate political parties, and Nyerere's suggestions fell on deaf ears.

The ideas of citizenship in the proposed constitution were similar to those developed at the end of Federation. Citizenship in Southern Rhodesia was based on personal history and sentiment; it was automatically conferred on "belongers," men and women who were born in the country or whose fathers were born in the country. Citizens had the option of dual citizenship because "many people had an emotional attachment to their country of origin."¹¹ This of course had only referred to white people in 1963, but in 1979 the inclusion of birthright citizenship was critical to the idea of a developmentalist state, able to secure knowledge of who lived within its borders.¹² The PF was outraged about the specificity of race in the British proposals, which, Mugabe complained, "call this minority 'European' or 'white.'" His delegation certainly wanted to see everyone in Zimbabwe represented in the legislature, but they opposed the British obsession with dividing everyone by race. All the people who live in Zimbabwe should be citizens of the country. "Is it possible to call a section of the community European? Surely there can be no such thing as a European in Africa?" When Carrington replied that the "political realities of the past cannot be ignored," nor could "the hopes and fears" of the people, Mugabe claimed the high ground. The liberation war had been waged to destroy the racial basis of Rhodesian society, and now the British "want us to retain such a system." Ian Gilmour reminded him that it had been agreed in Lusaka that the new constitution had to contain provisions that encouraged whites to stay. The PF was unrelenting. Why give pensions

¹⁰ I take this paragraph from several sources, Partha Chatterjee, *The Politics of the Governed. Reflections on Popular Politics in Most of the World* (New York, Columbia University Press, 2004); Mrinalini Sinha, *Specters of Mother India. The Global Restructuring of an Empire* (Durham, Duke University Press, 2006); Andrew Reynolds, "Reserved Seats in National Legislatures: A Research Note," *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 30, 2 (2005), 301-10; John Kelly and Martha Kaplan, "Legal Fictions after Empire," in Douglas Howland and Luise White, *The State of Sovereignty: Territories, Laws, Populations* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2009), 169-95.

¹¹ Dissolution of Federation, Citizenship and Related Subjects, 53rd Report of Committee A, 29 October 1963, Cabinet Memoranda, 1963, Part 6, Cory/Smith/17.

¹² Josiah Brownell, *The Collapse of Rhodesia: Population Demographics and the Politics of Race* (London, I. B. Taurus, 2011), 17, 34-35; John A. Harrington, "Citizenship and the Biopolitics of Post-Nationalist Ireland," *J. of Law and Society* 22, 3 (2005), 424-49.

to Rhodesian civil servants, Mugabe asked. Why not state that they would be rewarded for treason?¹³

Weeks of bilateral meetings followed. The PF presented its own proposed constitution on 17 September. It did not refer to pensions and it called the minority white. It proposed a ninety-six seat national assembly, with twenty-four seats reserved for white members: fifteen would be elected by a white voters' roll, and nine elected on the common roll. If this were not acceptable to the conference, the PF would accept twenty-four seats of a ninety-six seat assembly reserved for whites, all elected by a white voters roll. All amendments to the constitution would require a two-thirds vote of both the national assembly and the senate, which had to act within three months. If the senate did not act the amendment would be presented to the president anyway. The senate was to be expanded to sixty members, forty-eight of whom would be elected by members of the lower house, and twelve elected by the white members. The senate could not delay legislation as it had in the past; it was allowed one month to consider ordinary bills and three months to consider constitutional changes. The proposals for citizenship were contentious, however. Anyone deprived of their citizenship after 1965 should be allowed to resume it, but dual citizenship was not allowed. Any Zimbabwean with dual citizenship would have to renounce the other one within a year of independence, or at the age of eighteen. In very carefully worded proposals, the PF sought to make it impossible for anyone not already a citizen before 11 November 1965 to become one; anyone who immigrated to Rhodesia under UDI and became a citizen was not automatically granted citizenship in Zimbabwe.¹⁴ This bore no relation to earlier constitutions or ideas about citizenship therein; this was membership pure and simple, citizenship as an exclusionary category that was to extract a political price for the exclusions of UDI.¹⁵ It was also far more grounded in the politics of exile and liberation support therein than anything that had gone in Rhodesia between 1965 and

¹³ Stedman, *Peacemaking*, 178-79.

¹⁴ Patriotic Front, Brief summary of proposals for an independence constitution for Zimbabwe, mimeo., TNA/PREM/19/112.

¹⁵ I take this point from Linda Bozniak, *The Citizen and the Alien. Dilemmas of Contemporary Membership* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2012).

now.¹⁶ Anyone who had been in Rhodesia, or even read Rhodesian newspapers, would have known the extent to which new immigrants eschewed Rhodesian citizenship, that many did not stay long enough to fulfill the residency requirement and that many of those who did waited until they were past conscription age to take out citizenship papers.¹⁷

On 3 October Carrington tabled a revised constitution that addressed the disputed points. This version had already been accepted by the Salisbury delegation, which understood that pensions were more important to white Rhodesians than reserved seats in perpetuity. The vote on the constitution completely isolated Ian Smith.¹⁸ Citizenship was first. Anyone who had citizenship before independence would be confirmed as citizens thereafter. Carrington had rejected the PF's proposals out of hand. They would leave many thousands of people either stateless with insecure status as they awaited investigations into whether or not they could become citizens of Zimbabwe. These proposals retained dual citizenship. Pensions were not only guaranteed, but could be remitted overseas. The draft constitution noted that the PF would find it unreasonable for the new state to pay for service to the illegal one, but the UK had never taken on such a burden before and would not do so now. As for parliament and the question of reserved seats, the British proposals provided for twenty per cent of seats in the House of Assembly to be reserved for whites for seven years. During that time, it could only be amended by a unanimous vote in the chamber. After that it would be carried forward and subject to the normal procedures by which the constitution could be amended, a seventy per cent majority. The Senate was made larger, to make it more representative, but its delaying power was reduced.¹⁹

¹⁶ Liberation support movements, particularly in Europe, were irate by the ease by which white European citizens could take up residence in and benefit from the racist regimes in Southern Africa. See Comité Angola (Amsterdam), Anti-Apartheid Movement (London), Anti-Apartheid Movement (Dublin), et. al., *White Migration to Southern Africa*, mimeo., Geneva, Centre Europe-Tiers Monde, 1975.

¹⁷ Brownell, *Collapse*, 72-84; see also Cauter, *Under the Skin*, 113-14, 155; Arthur R. Lewis, *Too Bright the Vision? African Adventures of an Anglican Rebel* (London, Covenant Publishing, 1992), 246.

¹⁸ Stedman, *Peacemaking*, 180-81; Renwick, *Unconventional Diplomacy*, 38-39; Carrington, *Things Past*, 300. Ian Smith was the one negative vote in a secret ballot, because of others' "treachery" and "treason," *Great Betrayal*, 319-20. Ken Flower was equally dramatic, telling Muzorewa "that he was being martyred and that the choice he had to make was agonizingly unfair." *Serving Secretly*, 238.. Byatt, Salisbury, to FCO, 1 October 1979, TNA/PREM/19/112.

¹⁹ FCO, Rhodesia: The Independence Constitution, 3 October 1979, TNA/PREM/19/112.

The front line presidents responded. Nyerere found the PF's citizenship proposals fully justified. It was the British who were of two minds about Zimbabwean citizenship, making it automatic while at the same time insisting on the right to dual citizenship. He did not see pensions, however, as an impediment to the PF accepting the constitution.²⁰ In a lengthy cable sent hours after a phone conversation with Thatcher, Kaunda implied that he had already spoken to Nkomo. Citizenship, he wrote, "had given the Patriotic Front great cause for concern but this may no longer be a crucial issue." He was however concerned about reserved seats for whites, not that there would be too many, but that their role in parliament would be too great. In his view, the twenty per cent of the seats reserved for whites "should be exclusively designed to represent white interests." Given that this constitution gave twenty per cent of the seats to three per cent of the population, this twenty per cent should not be allowed "to form a coalition with any of the black groups" which would, obviously, amount to "a new blocking mechanism." Indeed, the unanimity rule was yet another form of blocking mechanism, which he urged the British delegation to reconsider. In the tone of a man who knew whereof he spoke, Kaunda wrote that if the PF were willing to accept the seventy per cent provision for amending the constitution, instead of the two-thirds they have demanded previously, "this should be accepted as a reasonable compromise to cover all clauses."²¹

The fact that that the Salisbury delegation had agreed to Carrington's revised constitution in bilateral meetings away from the conference made the PF apprehensive: they believed now had no choice but to accept the constitution. Chissano of Mozambique acted as a translator. The PF believed that that the Muzorewa was now free to implement the new constitution and be recognized as a legitimate regime. The British high commissioner in Maputo reminded him that the constitution was only part of a package agreed to in Lusaka, and that the transitional arrangements and the ceasefire were still to be negotiated with the PF. Chissano said he understood as much, but this issue worried the PF and caused them "psychological

²⁰ Moon, Dar es Salaam, to FCO, 1 October 1979, TNA/PREM/19/112.

²¹ Kaunda to Thatcher, 10 October 1979. Had Kaunda brought up the question of pensions, Thatcher's briefing document instructed her to explain these were an "essential and common element" in any solution to the Rhodesia problem. Points President Kaunda is likely to raise with the prime minister, typescript, 9 October 1979, TNA/PREM/19/112.

problems.”²² Whatever the PF knew of such meetings – Mozambique had observers at Lancaster House – they were not reassured in any way. Apprehension gave way to empty threats. A few days later, when Carrington went off to the Conservative Party conference to do battle with his right wing and the Monday Club, Mugabe went to the press in grand style. If the conference were to deadlock, he said, the PF would send their military men back to Africa. “We can win without Lancaster House.” The PF welcomed a settlement, but “we can achieve peace and justice for our people through the barrel of a gun.”²³ After a few days of futile negotiations, Carrington gave the PF a deadline and hinted at what the PF feared most, that he would continue bilateral talks with the Salisbury delegation. This was the moment of great theatrical suspense. Journalists insisted that Carrington would either make a deal without the PF or use that threat to bargain with the PF.²⁴ But again, Carrington had to know the pressures the PF was under. He reassured the US – and presumably many in London -- that he would do nothing of the sort: the foreign office had always thought there was a “reasonable prospect” that the PF would in the end accept the constitution.²⁵

The PF accepted the constitution a few days later. Jeffrey Davidow of the US delegation considered this a result of Carrington’s well-informed brinksmanship, aided by wire taps and bugs in the hotel rooms of the PF (and presumably Salisbury) leaders.²⁶ Stephen Stedman, who had interviewed several ZAPU delegates in the mid-1980s in Zimbabwe, described the intense debates within the delegation and the hollow threats of returning to war. In the midst of these meetings Josiah Tongogara arrived from Maputo to inform his comrades what ZAPU already knew: if they walked out of negotiations, their front line patrons would take away their

²² Parsons, Maputo, to FCO, 4 October 1979, TNA/PREM/19/112.

²³ Quoted in Jeffrey Davidow, *A Peace in Southern Africa: The Lancaster House Conference on Rhodesia, 1979* (Boulder, Westview Press, 1984), 62-63; Carrington, *Things Past*, 298-300.

²⁴ Martin Meredith, *The Past is Another Country: Rhodesia UDI to Zimbabwe* (London, Pan Books, 1979), 380-85.

²⁵ Carrington to Washington, Rhodesia: Consultations with the Americans, 10 October 1979, TNA/PREM/19/112.

²⁶ Davidow, *Peace*, 128n.

bases.²⁷ In his memoirs, Nkomo wrote that he agreed to the constitution because they did not want to give Britain reason “to wash their hands of the whole affair.”²⁸

VII.

Even as Carrington was reassuring Americans that the PF would sign the constitution, he briefed them on the plans for the transition. The purpose of the transition was free and fair elections by which the people of Rhodesia would choose their future government. The British wanted a brief uncomplicated transitional period with a transitional government or a transitional constitution for which they would take full responsibility. The transitional period should not last more than three months; as British diplomats said at the time and as Commonwealth observers said years later, no one thought a ceasefire could hold much longer.²⁹ However reasonable these seemed to Americans, they were explosive issues to both the Salisbury and PF delegations. The questions of the interim, of who would govern, who would police, who could campaign and above all who could vote and where they might do so were freighted with the recent past, made more intense because the counterfeit practices by which Muzorewa came to power cast a long and monotonous shadow over the conference well into November. Yet even Muzorewa, who constantly reminded the conference that his government was already the legally elected government of Zimbabwe, backed down on the

²⁷ Stedman, *Peacekeeping*, 182. The ANC in Lusaka told the story of Nkomo leaving for the London conference. Kaunda came to see him off. When Nkomo casually said “See you when we get back,” Kaunda just shook his head. This is when he realized the war was over, that they had to reach a settlement this time because they lost their Zambian base, see Gillian Slovo, *Every Secret Thing: My Family, My Country* (London, Little, Brown and Co., 1997), 132. Indeed, Carrington was well aware that Nkomo was likely to compromise, see Carrington to OAU heads of state, 11 October 1979, TNA/PREM/19/113. Years later he wrote that the constitution was accepted because “everybody (including Mugabe) began to prefer the idea of settlement to the alternatives.” *Things Past*, 300-1.

²⁸ Nkomo, *My Life*, 194.

²⁹ Carrington to Washington, 10 October 1979, TNA/PREM/112; Stedman, *Peacemaking*, 183; author’s field notes, London, 12 June 1911.

issue of the British governor.³⁰ As Ian Gilmour patiently explained, rather than allow one side – Muzorewa’s government – to run the country, it was better to give the task to neither side, the British.³¹ The PF accepted the governor, but repeatedly asked that his powers be clarified. The issue was one of trust, Carrington said. Anyone who wanted free and fair elections would have to trust the British. Mugabe seized the moment: Wilson had asked Africans to trust the British in 1965, why should they trust the British now? Despite over a week of objections, there could be no interim government before the elections. Muzorewa’s ministers would remain in their posts; it took days for the conference to be reassured that they would enact no legislation during the transition. This was standard practice in decolonization, the Salisbury delegation noted. There was no case in history where an existing government or security forces had been dismantled before independence. The PF delegation interrupted: this was not decolonization. Only a new government and new security forces could prevent another UDI. The PF was especially concerned that the police – the BSAP – would be charged with keeping order during the transition. How could any agency of the illegal regime that had participated in the war be trusted to protect the PF, let alone allow them to campaign? Edison Zvobgo of the PF delegation, who had issued various death lists from Maputo after the internal settlement, went to the press: “Does Britain really expect Mugabe and Nkomo to sleep in Salisbury guarded by Muzorewa’s men? We might not even see the end of an election...” Carrington understood the PF’s reservations, but pointed out that the BSAP were the only police force available, that there was simply no such thing as a civil police force in Rhodesia. Ian Smith defended the police: they had only become involved in the war because of guerrilla attacks on civilians. Mugabe responded that this did not reassure the PF, but underscored the extent to which the police were part of the Rhodesian war effort. Such arguments went on for days. How exactly would the governor supervise the police, how could the PF be sure they would not follow the punitive

³⁰ This “bitter pill” has been attributed to Carrington’s skillful persuasion or General Peter Walls more direct influence and the unwillingness of many whites in Muzorewa’s delegation to sacrifice any constitutional gains for his leadership, see Davidow, *A Peace*, 69-70 and Tamarkin, *Making of Zimbabwe*, 266. The only people who seemed to want Muzorewa to stay in office, even as a figurehead, were moderate white Rhodesians, who feared that if stepped down it would create a realignment of African politics in the country, see Byatt, Salisbury, to FCO, 22 October 1979, TNA/PREM/19/113.

³¹ Statement delivered by Ian Gilmour, 21st plenary, 31 October 1979. These notes were generously loaned to be by Stephen Stedman.

laws of the Rhodesian state? So long as PF forces were not part of the governing apparatus, they could not provide any kind of check on the excesses of existing forces. Leo Solomon Baron, ZAPU's longtime lawyer, observed that in any post-war situation the police were feared; the use of the BSAP could intimidate voters. Josiah Tongogara, the commander of ZANLA forces, thought his forces would object, perhaps violently, to the use of the police.³² The PF went on at length about the abuse of police power in decolonization. This was an attempt to blame Britain – and not Rhodesia – for post-colonial ills, and the PF interim proposals condemned the UK for refusing “to face or solve” the problems that had caused so much instability and suffering in Cyprus and Palestine.³³ Such historical examples seem to have made Carrington and Gilmour uneasy, not because they necessarily disagreed, but because they ran counter to the imaginary of orderly, electoral decolonization that was so critical to the settlement process.

While Carrington met with the Salisbury delegation, he sent his minister for African affairs, Richard Luce, to the front line states. Officially, this was to inform these presidents of the British proposals; unofficially it seemed to be the most reliable way to find out what kinds of objections and demands the PF would have. Kaunda expressed concerns about the timescale for the elections and the registration of voters. Registration, to which Zambia attached the utmost importance, could be done in three months; that was how long it took in Zambia, and Rhodesia had much better roads and communication systems. Kaunda was “insistent” that the PF be allowed adequate time to campaign; allowing only two or three months would be considered a “trick.” The PF was competing against parties already established in the country; six months would be the “fairer” period to give them an equal chance.³⁴ Chissano found the imposition of British control an excellent idea, wanted Muzorewa to step down, and did not think it was necessary to dismantle the security forces, although the rest of the world might not approve of this. They would have to be watched. He supported Carrington in thinking the interim period should be as short as possible, but that the PF would

³² Zvogbo quoted in Stedman, *Peacemaking*, 190. Summary of the 20th plenary, 30 October 1979; 21st plenary, 31 October 1979; 24th plenary, 1 November 1979; 27th plenary, 6 November 1979 1979.

³³ Summary of 24th plenary, 1 November 1979; “Patriotic Front Analysis of British proposals for the Interim Period,” 12 November 1979; see Stedman, *Peacemaking*, 188.

³⁴ Richard Luce to FCO, 20 October 1979, TNA/PREM/19/113.

demand adequate time to campaign. Neither they nor the Salisbury delegation could be expected to agree to peace at any price.³⁵ The foreign minister of Botswana – the man who had informed the UK mission to the UN of Machel’s bullying the PF in Havana – remonstrated Luce for negotiating first, in secret, with the Salisbury delegation. If the front line presidents had been involved from the start, they could have brought influence to bear on the PF. He did not object to a two or three month interim period and understood the difficulties of registering voters and delimiting constituencies, but hoped there would be some sympathy for the PF’s request for a longer period. He had no sympathy, however, for any demands to integrate guerrilla forces into the security forces before the election. Indeed, he reported that at the NAM meeting in Havana the front line presidents had told the PF that future arrangements for the military could not be made until after a new government was elected.³⁶

Concerns about the length of the interim period often masked concerns about how long it would take refugees to the front line states that housed them. The foreign minister of Angola, for example, worried that the interim did not allow political parties to explain their policies to an electorate he assumed was largely illiterate. He was somewhat more worried about the definition of refugees. Did it include freedom fighters? Were they to lay down their arms and return to Rhodesia or would travel home armed, through the Angolan countryside?³⁷ Nyerere met with Luce and then clarified certain points with the British high commissioner. He understood why the British wanted such a short interim period, but two months was too short a time and he could not recommend the PF to accept it. The PF wanted six months, to “go home” and establish themselves before the elections.³⁸ A few days after these meetings, Kaunda wrote to Thatcher elaborating on his talk with Luce and laying the ground work for the arguments Nkomo would make in London. The interim period the British proposed was too short. There were hundreds of thousands of refugees who would have to return home to vote, and the Patriot Front would need time to organize themselves into a political party. They have been in exile and have not been political parties in Zimbabwe for almost twenty years: they

³⁵ Luce to FCO, 22 October 1979, TNA/PREM/19/113.

³⁶ Luce to FCO, 22 October 1979, TNA/PREM/19/113.

³⁷ Luce to FCO, 24 October 1979, TNA/PREM/19/113.

³⁸ Sir Peter Moon, Dar es Salaam, to FCO, 28 October 1979, TNA/PREM/19/113.

would require a reasonable period to campaign. The major requirement for holding free and fair elections was the registration of voters. He was alarmed that the British did not think this could be done in the interim period; the registration of voters can be accomplished in three months.³⁹ The goals of voter registration, of sufficient time to mount an effective campaign were the other side of the imaginary of orderly electoral decolonization, about which Kaunda and Nyerere seemed almost nostalgic. The demands the PF brought to the conference at the end of October, however, imagined elections as anything but orderly. They demanded not only the registration of voters, but the banning of mobile polling stations.

However well prepared the British delegation was for the objections PF's objections to the arrangements for the new election, they did not seem prepared for the intense repetitive bickering about the arrangements for the new election and how they threatened to split the PF delegation. Once it had been agreed that the governor would take full control, the Salisbury delegation accepted the British proposals for the interim. Muzorewa's deputy, Mundawarara, issued a statement to the entire conference but presumably for the benefit of the PF, explaining why they had done so and why registering voters was impossible. He agreed that constituencies were the best basis for free and fair elections but in this case speed was of the essence. There was no way that 2.8 million people, including thousands displaced by war, could be registered in their home areas; thus there could not be a fair delimitation of constituencies. People had been living with insecurity too long to delay elections.⁴⁰ Mugabe was not impressed. Why was there no new election law? The old election law, the one ignored in 1979, was that of an illegal regime. Among its provisions was one that disenfranchised anyone who had been in detention for six months or more. Surely those laws could no longer stand. What of the election observers? Was their job just to look, to observe and to register the results once the votes were tallied? Or did they have some authority to supervise, to make sure the elections were free and fair? As for the registration of voters, the British had used the example of Botswana to say it would take so long, but what about Zambia or Kenya? Zambia had registered 700 voters a day in every constituency in the 1960s. That should be the model

³⁹ Kaunda to Thatcher, 26 October 1979, TNA/PREM/19/113.

⁴⁰ Statement by Dr. Mundawarara, 21st plenary, 31 October 1979.

for the conference.⁴¹

In the lengthy and acrimonious debates that followed, the PF asked that the interim period be long enough to bring refugees back to vote. Would the British pay for their transport to go home? Gilmour and Renwick, with the British delegation, asked if these refugees included cadres detained by ZANU in Mozambique. Mugabe said there were no such detainees, just as the Salisbury delegation claimed there were no political detainees in Zimbabwe Rhodesia. The PF wanted the electoral law changed, to dispense with the elaborate legal procedures by which parties scheduled meetings and advertised in the news media. Gilmour assured the PF that the British governor would make sure campaigns and elections were fair. After that, the PF seems to have gone off script; they began to make a series of demands that had little to do with how decolonizing elections were imagined and everything to do with how the 1979 election was conducted. The PF opposed mobile polling stations. The British delegation could not fathom why. Because, Leo Baron explained, mobile polling stations could lead to all kinds of abuses when there was no registration of voters. If all voters were registered there would be no problem, but without registration what was to prevent people from going from one polling station to another and voting twice? Mundawarara was taken aback: in 1979 no one reported any problems at mobile polling stations; they were indispensable for people in remote areas. Besides, Gilmour said, each party could have observers at each polling station. The PF wanted one day of voting instead of two or the three of 1979. Nkomo explained why: if the election took place over three days, there were more opportunities to bus people from one polling station to another as they could travel at night. This could not happen, Gilmour said. There were indelible dyes that lasted longer than the polling period and this should serve as a way to prevent people voting more than once wherever they voted.⁴² Gilmour

⁴¹ Summary, 21st plenary, 31 October 1979. Zambia, and its various figures for voter registration, figures prominently in these debates. ZAPU was based in Lusaka, and ZANU had been until a few years earlier, so both parties would have been familiar with Kaunda's account of early voter registration. And Zambian voting had been a major trope in the debates about the 1961 constitution that blindsided Nkomo. The 700 a week may not be an accurate figure, however. In the eleven weeks allowed for voter registration lower roll registration was less than half of the government's goal. Even when UNIP received an extension, the best I can estimate for lower and upper roll registration was 500 per week. David C. Mulford, *The Northern Rhodesian Election 1962* (Nairobi, Oxford University Press, 1964), 52-58.

⁴² Summary, 22nd plenary, 31 October 1979.

issued a statement that evening. He answered most of the PF's questions by underscoring the extent of the governor's control over security forces and the running of the government. There could be no new electoral law until a new government was in place. For the forthcoming election, there would be a British electoral commissioner who will make sure no one votes twice. But there could not be voter registration. It would take too long. The PF's demands for officials to register voters and then delimit constituencies were tasks for a post-independence election, not an interim one.⁴³

The next day Nkomo asked for a longer interim period. If it was only two months and failed, the British would be held responsible, whereas if it were six months, there could be power-sharing. Carrington was back in the chair, and impatient. The interim was to last two months, he said, ample time to campaign was the ceasefire was in place; the British firmly believed that the shorter the interim period the better it would be for all concerned. Nkomo wanted four months, then five or six. Simon Muzenda, from Mugabe's delegation, explained that it would take five months to remove all the land mines, so people could travel safely to polling stations. Carrington said the ceasefire would begin as soon as the governor arrived; no one could wait for landmines to be dug up. Nkomo was undeterred: some things, like voter registration, could not be done until there was a ceasefire, and then there was the matter of delimiting constituencies. It was important to learn the size of the electorate. He produced a mathematical formula to tell the conference how this might best be done: if the ceasefire period was X and the registration/delimitation period was Y, then the total period of the interim was $X + Y + 2$.⁴⁴

The next day Carrington brought revised proposals before the conference. These repeated that the governor would be responsible for the conduct of the elections but there would be freedom of assembly and freedom of movement. All parties would be legal and free to campaign and Commonwealth observers would serve as an additional guarantee that the election was free and fair. The British fully understood that the thousands of refugees living

⁴³ Statement by Lord Privy Seal [Ian Gilmour], 22nd plenary, 31 October 1979.

⁴⁴ Summary 23rd plenary, 1 November 1979. When I was first reading these summaries I asked someone who had been an observer at Lancaster House why Nkomo seemed to be grasping at straws by late October. The answer: "everyone knew Joshua couldn't run a country." Author's field notes, London, 15 June 2011.

outside Rhodesia wanted to return to vote in the election. It would be difficult to organize the return of all refugees, but the governor would begin the task of bringing everyone home, although the task would have to be completed by the independent government and the neighboring states. The interim period would be two months; this had been accepted by the Salisbury delegation but the PF continued to object.⁴⁵ Over the next few days, the PF amplified their objects, often returning to issues that Carrington, at least, thought had been resolved. Who would control security forces, especially the “notorious” regiments, why would judges remain at their posts, why praise the Salisbury delegation for making “sacrifices”? How could a return from illegality to legality be a sacrifice? There were demands that the interim arrangements be negotiated again with great care. The PF delegation had come to negotiate, Ushewokunze said: they had waited “eighty-nine years” for independence.⁴⁶

The repetitive debates of the first half of November were generally thought to be a delaying tactic by the PF, although what they might have gained beyond a clarification of what the front line presidents would support is not clear. But however impatient Carrington and Gilmour were, this delay gave the British delegation an enormous advantage, as high commissioners and ambassadors assessed the mood of neighboring states. They found newly articulated concerns and openings. Kaunda asked for an interim period of five months— so many in the PF had been outside the country it would take time for them “to get adjusted” – but he made it clear that he wanted as many refugees as possible to go back for the elections.⁴⁷ For the first time, there was talk of the inevitable split between ZANU and ZAPU. In Maputo, several ambassadors from eastern bloc countries – countries that gave arms and funds to the guerrilla armies -- complained to British diplomats that there was no hope for socialism in a free Zimbabwe, and even less hope of Nkomo and Mugabe uniting in one. “Everybody, but everybody,” the East German ambassador said with emphasis, is “fed up” with Rhodesia

⁴⁵ Conference paper, 2 November 1979; Carrington’s statement, 25th plenary, 2 November 1979.

⁴⁶ Summary, 26th plenary, 5 November 1979; Statement by Gilmour, 27th plenary, 6 November 1979; summary, 27th plenary, 6 November 1979

⁴⁷ Allison, Lusaka, to FCO, 1 November 1979; Kaunda to FCO, 1 November 1979. Due to a clerical error, Allison did not know of this letter when he met with Kaunda, TNA/PREM/19/114.

and “fervently” wants a solution.⁴⁸ This was one of several suggestions that the PF thought the front line states had become too moderate, and wanted to go to the UN for more vocal support.⁴⁹ At the same time, Botha in South Africa seemed willing to abandon Muzorewa altogether. He looked “more and more like a patient with a terminal illness” than a politician worthy of the 270 million he had been given by South Africa. Rhodesia seemed a lost cause; South African diplomats in London believed the conference had fallen into a trap laid by Nkomo’s Soviet instigators. If the British really believed that the stalemate would end soon, Botha hoped they would take over the funding of Muzorewa, “without which he would be lost.”⁵⁰ Kaunda restated his support for all but two of the British proposals. Again, he insisted that the interim period was too short. The PF leaders had been abroad for years, how could they return, set up offices and campaign in just two months. Writing the day after Muzorewa’s forces raided eastern Zambia, the question of refugees, and their return, seemed to distress him most. Kaunda estimated that there were 200,000 Zimbabwean refugees outside the country, 50-60,000 in Zambia, 20 to 30,000 in Botswana, 8-10,000 in Angola and the rest in Mozambique. Kaunda wanted them out of Zambia; he did not want them participating in the Zimbabwe election from Zambia, but was concerned they would be carrying arms as they returned home. “It would be the poorest strategy,” he wrote to Thatcher, to allow refugees to “vote where they are outside Rhodesia.”⁵¹ When he went to London, the acting president told the British high commissioner that a settlement was near. The problem now was creating a level playing field

⁴⁸ Papadopoulos, Maputo, to FCO, 2 November 1979, TNA/PREM/19/114. Obviously there were disagreements about this. The next day at a social occasion Papadopoulos was told by someone close to the president that if the conference broke down, Mozambique would support renewed war which would require military equipment and military personal from “a number of countries.” Papadopoulos to FCO, 3 November 1979, TNA/PREM/19/114.

⁴⁹ Parsons, UK mission to UN, to FCO, 6 November 1979, TNA/PREM/19/114.

⁵⁰ Leahy, Pretoria, to FCO, 3 November 1979, TNA/PREM/19/114. Factions in Nigeria actively supported Muzorewa and offered to send troops to monitor the ceasefire and protect him. Brown, Lagos, to FCO, 7 November 1979, TNA/PREM/19/114.

⁵¹ Kaunda to Thatcher, 7 November 1979, TNA/PREM/19/114. Kaunda had expressed such grave concern about the post-settlement presence of refugees that Allison wondered if the British could airlift refugees back to Zimbabwe. Allison, Lusaka, to FCO, 3 November 1979; Allinson, Lusaka, to FCO, 6 November 1979, TNA/PREM/19/114. A “maize squeeze” was announced in Salisbury the same day, presumably as a warning against Zambian retaliation, but November was immediately after the maize harvest so it was unlikely that this intensified Kaunda’s eagerness to help with a settlement, but see Tamarkin, *Making of Zimbabwe*, 266.

for the election, so the Patriotic Front could not cry “foul” when they lost the election.⁵² Kaunda met with Thatcher and Carrington on 8 November; they were well prepared as Mark Chona had met with Thatcher’s parliamentary secretary the night before.⁵³ They wanted Kaunda to use his influence on the PF to resolve the issues of the transition soon, but they clearly meant Nkomo. To their surprise, Kaunda did not dwell on the length of the interim but on what advantages Muzorewa as even a figurehead prime minister might have in the election. Carrington did not think this was necessarily a problem, that perhaps a coalition government could create stability in the early years of independence. Kaunda disagreed. A coalition government would be too weak; only a government elected by a strong majority could give the country the direction it required. Neither objected. In fact, Carrington and Thatcher then shamelessly praised Nkomo as “the most charismatic” figure among Zimbabwean nationalists.⁵⁴

The British delegation seemed to be emboldened by this meeting, and appeared finished with flattery. Thanks to Kaunda, they had already seen the PF’s proposals. In a statement the next morning, Carrington complained that the PF often said they had the support of eighty per cent of the population. Why then did they need two months to put it to a test?⁵⁵ When the PF finally presented their proposals on 12 November they generated little excitement and even less discussion. There was very little to discuss. Much of the document was devoted to parsing the exact meaning of “elections under British supervision” and “the whole electoral process” the Commonwealth was supposed to observe. It repeated questions about the role of the judiciary and the powers of the governor. It demanded a longer interim, because “military experience” showed how difficult it was to keep the peace in the first two or three months of a cease fire. After that it was easy. A longer interim would allow for the registration of voters, which would prevent voting by non-residents “such as tourists and people coming across the borders”; voting by people younger than the voting age, and fraudulent voting, such as putting marked ballots in ballot boxes before the election. Only by registering voters it was impossible

⁵² Allison to FCO, 8 November 1979, TNA/PREM/19/114.

⁵³ Ian Gow, Note of a meeting held at the residence of the Zambian high commissioner, London, 7 November 1979, TNA/PREM/19/114.

⁵⁴ Richard Alexander, Thatcher’s private secretary, to FCO, President Kaunda’s visit, 8 November 1979, TNA/PREM/19/114.

⁵⁵ Carrington statement, 30th plenary, 10 November 1979.

to figure out the voting population or create constituencies of any accuracy. If there were no constituencies people could vote in districts other than the ones in which they lived. Even so, registration was necessary for party list elections to be free and fair. Britain was wrong to say that registration would take too long. How long it took depended on the size of the staff; an adequate staff could complete registration in three months. Zambia was once again the example. Prior to independence, voters there “were registered at a rate of 700 per day per constituency.” At this rate it would be possible to register 3 million voters in sixty days.⁵⁶

Although Mugabe and Nkomo wanted bilateral meetings and more discussions, there were neither. The Salisbury delegation must have known – as did Carrington -- how much the fluid practices of the 1979 election lurked behind the demand for voter registration and stationary polling booths, but they also must have understood that their own vulnerable status in the next election rendered these concerns uncalled for. On November 14, Kaunda’s proposals were tabled. These proposed some compromises: an interim period of at least four months, an electoral commission that represented both the PF and Salisbury regime, and no less than 300 Commonwealth observers chosen by the Commonwealth secretariat from a minimum of ten countries. Carrington replied with a few clarifications – the governor would have complete control over all forces, all electoral misconduct would be dealt with at once – and made the slightest of compromises about the interim period. Knowing full well that this was more of a posture than a position for Kaunda, Carrington said that the British had initially elections to be held four to six weeks after the cease fire began, but taking into account the views of the PF they know believed elections should take place eight or nine weeks, or two months, after the cease fire.⁵⁷ It was the slightest of sleights of hand, but it worked. Even though the Salisbury delegation objected to Kaunda’s proposals on the grounds that he was not one of the parties of the all-party conference, the PF agreed that their forces would be under the governor’s control, and signed the transitional agreement.⁵⁸

Throughout these meetings, no one in Julius Nyerere’s government was willing

⁵⁶ PF delegation document, circulated to conference, 12 November 1979; Carrington’s statement, 32nd plenary, 14 November 1979.

⁵⁷ Proposals by President Kaunda; statement by Carrington, 32nd plenary, 14 November 1979.

⁵⁸ Summary and Carrington’s statement, 33rd plenary, 15 November 1979.

to compromise on the length of the interim period. Of all the British proposals, they insisted that this one was “unreasonable.” As late as 12 November Nyerere promised that he and the other front line presidents would ensure that the PF kept their part of a cease fire, but that cease fire had to be six months. He had, after all, not hesitated to ask the PF to accept terms they did not like, but now he wanted an additional Commonwealth meeting to assess the length of the interim period.⁵⁹ On 14 November, presumably aware of Kaunda’s proposals, Nyerere wrote to Thatcher with perhaps his most ominous defense of the six month interim period. Two months was simply not enough time for the PF to have a fair chance in the polling booths. The Front itself was made up of parties that have been illegal in Rhodesia for many years, and leaders who have been outside the country for almost as long; they have organized themselves for war, not political campaigning. The parties that make up the PF have no existing political organization, no candidates ready, and no means of moving around the country. If the British insist on a two month cease fire, “there will not be a cease fire at all.”⁶⁰ As the next chapter argues, he was not far wrong.

⁵⁹ Moon, Dar es Salaam, to FCO, 9 November 1979; Moon to FCO, 12 November 1979, TNA/PREM/19/114. For a different view of Nyerere’s role in the events in this chapter see Arrigo Palloti, “Tanzania and the Decolonization of Rhodesia,” *Afriche e Orientali* (2, 2011), 215-31.

⁶⁰ Nyerere to Thatcher, 14 November 1979, TNA/PREM/19/114.